

Tulare County Audubon Society
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September 18, 1999

CAL-FED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth St., #1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Members of CALFED,

On behalf of Tulare County Audubon Society I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this vital albeit controversial plan. Following is a summary of positions, recommendations, ideas and opinions of Tulare County Audubon Society.

The draft documents for CALFED do not adequately reflect or model the full potential for water conservation and efficiency to meet California's water needs. As we have witnessed over the past ten years, California is growing rapidly, and the weather can still deliver a drought.

California has a tremendous projected population growth with ever increasing needs. Providing water, food, housing, recreation and transportation as well as wildlife habitat is vital. Unfortunately, these needs translate into urban sprawl, increased generation of waste, air and water pollution and decreased wildlife habitat. Efficient and fair water management will be the most essential element in planning for population growth.

The first stage of the program should emphasize water conservation and efficiency, pollution prevention and the preservation of the quality of drinking water. Water conservation should include incentives for homeowners, businesses and developers to use drought tolerant native plants, drip irrigation and grass free landscaping. Water saving plumbing in buildings such as low flow shower heads and taps and dams in toilets can involve the community in conserving water resources. Water meters and scheduling could also be a part of their involvement. Treating every day as a drought day will save water!

Water treatment should also be a part of this first stage with care to include management of gray water associated with housing developments. Communities should be helped to implement, not simply research, advanced drinking water technologies to improve drinking water quality without harming the environment. The focus on pollution should be on prevention to eliminate toxins, pesticides herbicides and animal waste at their sources. Dioxin must be included in the list of contaminants of concern. We support Governor Davis' decision to phase out MTBE. We wish it could be sooner. Limitation of watercraft which burns 2-stroke fuel would benefit water quality in places like our own Kaweah Lake.

Last, but not least, a constant reliable water supply must be provided for maintenance of existing wetlands and provisions made for restoring as many damaged wetlands as possible. Farmers that wish to convert farmland to wetlands should receive incentives to do so. Wetlands are vital to a healthy eco-system in California and provide nesting and resting habitat for the millions of waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway. Riparian areas must also be protected and provisions made for habitat restoration on as many streams as possible.

We realize that the bottom line on the entire CALFED program is what is best for the most number of people at the lowest cost. We also realize that not all needs will be met. Much of the initial funding will, of course, be taxpayer based. However, wherever possible, user fees should be the rule of the day. Water in all its uses in California is not free. We all need to share equitably in using and paying for the water.

In summary, this program will prove to be one of the most complex and critical plans ever developed for all of California whether business, agricultural or environmental. May the decisions we make preserve the beauty and splendor that is at the heart of the California dream.

Thank you for your consideration.



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